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The Higher Learning in America: a Memorandum on the Conduct of Universities by Business Men. By THORSTEIN VEBLEN. (New York: B. W. Huebsch. 1918. Pp. 286. \$2.00.)

THE reader must not expect to find in this little book a discussion of the past development of the higher learning, historical or other, in the United States, or of its present situation, or of its future prospects, or of the methods by which it may be made to flourish—save as regards the one particular to which its subtitle limits the book. It is a discussion of the trustee or regent system in American universities. As such, it is in part an historical work, which may be appropriately reviewed in an historical journal, for, with none of the apparatus of dates and almost no specific details, with hardly a direct mention of any one of our universities (though with somewhat too much hinting at two of them), Professor Veblen analyzes skillfully an important chapter of our intellectual and institutional history. He sets out to show us, in his usual ironical style, the evils that have flowed from that quaint system on which our universities are administered—a system to which there are few parallels elsewhere in the world, but to which we have become so accustomed that we hardly see how odd it is. Briefly, an American university consists of a body of relatively specialized experts (the faculty), ruled over by a body of relatively ignorant amateurs (trustees or regents), acting through an over-powerful president who either shares their point of view, their admiration for numbers and quantities and visible signs of material success, their crude zeal for competition with other universities, or else feels obliged to act for the most part as if he did. Such a system obviously imposes great difficulties and restraints upon the development of the higher learning in our universities. Mr. Veblen hardly exaggerates them. One has but to think of the board of trustees nearest to his own observation, and to ask himself how many of these business men, lawyers, “prominent citizens”, one would ever think of consulting respecting any matter of scholarship, apart from the interests of their particular institution. The probability is that, if we exclude from consideration the lower work of thesis-making, in the field of the higher learning our universities are, in proportion to their size, less productive than they were twenty years ago.

But some things may be said in abatement of Professor Veblen's strictures. (1) The conditions are not so black as he has painted them—there may be reasons why they may seem darkest to an economist. Like some other American institutions—the spoils system, for instance—the rule of trustees has worked better than theoretically it ought to work. These “prominent citizens” feel that they ought to serve the interests of the higher learning, and mean to do so, though incompetent to do it well. (2) Mr. Veblen assumes that the primary function of the university is to promote science and learning, and that all teaching, all care of undergraduates, all the work of the professional schools, are

secondary, are indeed improper excrescences upon its real work. But has a man a right, in non-mathematical discussions, to base reasoning on peculiar definitions of his own? Was ever any American university founded, or any university in the world long carried on, except primarily for teaching? And if founded mainly to meet the community's varied needs for teaching, it is reasonable that the community should be represented in the management, though *hoffentlich* by more suitable men than now, more widely representative of classes of the community, and contented to take a more modest status in relation to the professors than now, to co-operate and confer rather than to dictate or to "hire and fire" or to "back up the president". (3) Mr. Veblen exaggerates, as it seems to the reviewer, the extent to which the superior investigator is stimulated and aided by having to teach graduate students—as graduate students run now—and so underrates the rôle which is to be played in the future development of learned investigation among us by institutions founded for that special purpose. They are visibly increasing and are doing well. They may yet do more than the universities, for the advancement of learning.

But Mr. Veblen's essay is profitable reading—especially for trustees.

Woodrow Wilson, an Interpretation. By A. MAURICE LOW. (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company. 1918. Pp. ix, 291. \$2.00.)

THIS interpretation is based primarily upon two things, upon Mr. Wilson's book *Congressional Government*, and on his messages and addresses as president. These are so treated, the author hopes, that judgment will be an independent product on the reader's part. Perhaps it will be, but it will have to reckon with Mr. Low's own judgment of Mr. Wilson. If this estimate of the President, by an Englishman who knows his America better than do most of us, is the ultimate verdict of Mr. Wilson's countrymen and of the world when time has rescued him from partizanship and history has claimed him as its own, then his place is assured among the very few of the world's really great and the still fewer of these great whom America numbers as its own. To those readers who cannot see eye to eye with the foreigner, there will still be a satisfaction in the part he assigns American citizenship in the opening sketch of the morally awakened America which, aroused by Cleveland, Roosevelt, and Bryan, made possible the choice and work of a man of Mr. Wilson's type and training.

If one may interpret Mr. Low in his turn, one would say that among the books to which as a foreigner he was grateful for an analysis of American institutions and legislative procedure was Woodrow Wilson's *Congressional Government*. He evidently knew it well, and when its author appeared above the horizon of national life this London journalist had in it a key to Mr. Wilson's methods and executive policies which our American journalists had never acquired. In the pages of this